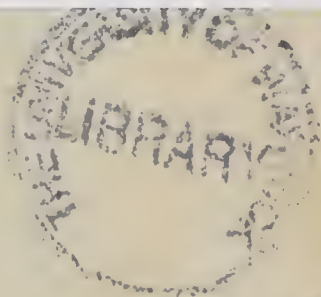




Idiot Witness

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In Times Past

The Idiot Witness, or a Tale of Blood.

AS He sleeps! all is safe!—Now to complete my work.

Vol. I. Part 2

Published by George Colborne to Little Queen St^h Holborn.

THE IDIOT WITNESS:

A MELO DRAMA,

IN

Two Acts.

By J. T. HAINES, Esq.

*Author of Nick of the Woods, Rattlin the Reefer, Jacob Faithful,
The Wraith of the Lake, Maidens Beware, Breakers Ahead, &c.*

THE ONLY EDITION CORRECTLY MARKED, BY PERMISSION,
FROM THE PROMPTER'S BOOK.

To which is added,

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS
THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS, }
SITUATIONS—ENTRANCES—EXITS—PROPERTIES, AND
DIRECTIONS.

AS PERFORMED AT THE
London Theatres. }

EMBELLISHED WITH A FINE ENGRAVING

By Mr. T. H. Jones, from a Drawing taken expressly in the Theatre.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN DUNCOMBE,
10, MIDDLE ROW, HOLBORN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

	—*—	
	Coburg.	Surrey.
<i>Le seur Arnaud</i>	Mr. Bengough.	Mr. D. Pitt.
<i>Robert Arnaud, his son</i>	Mr. Hill.	Mr. Gale.
<i>Paul Tugscull, a ferryman,</i>	Mr. Davidge.	Mr. Hall
<i>Hans Gerthold, a Russian</i>		
<i>in his pay</i>	Mr. Bradley.	Mr. Almar
<i>Walter Arlington, Page to</i>		
<i>the Queen</i>	Mad. Le Clercq.	Mrs. Wilkinson
<i>Earl of Sussex</i>	Mr. Hobbs.	Mr. Hobbs.
<i>Gilbert, the Idiot Witness,</i>	Mr. Haines.	Mr. H. Kemble
<i>Dame Tugscull</i>	Mrs. Weston.	Mrs. Clifford
<i>Janet, her daughter</i>	Mrs. Young.	Miss Wilmot.
<i>Attendants, &c. &c.</i>		

CHARACTERS IN THE PAGEANT :

<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	Mrs. Bradley
<i>Noblemen, attendant on the Queen—Ladies of the Court, &c.</i>	

COSTUME :

Arnaud—black velvet jacket and trunks; large black cloak, black hose, shoes, and rosettes.

Robert—blue jacket and pantaloons, puffed with orange satin; spangles and buttons russet boots, black hat and white feathers.

Tugscull—Tabbed blue jacket, petticoat trowsers.

Gerthold—black and red tabbed jacket, full brown trunks, black boots, drab hat.

Walter—blue and white page's tunic, handsome trimmed white hose, yellow boots, spurs, drab hat, white feathers.

Earl of Sussex—richly trimmed jacket and trunk dress of crimson, boots, black hat, white feathers.

Gilbert—black dress without trimming, tight to the shape; black shoes, long straight black hair, russet leather belt.

Queen Elizabeth—dress made from the portrait.

Dame—brown old English dress, with points.

Janet—light blue old English dress, black points; hat.

Exits and Entrances.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; R.D. *Right Door*; L.D. *Left Door*
 S.E. *Second Entrance*; U.E. *Upper Entrance*; M.D. *Middle Door*

Relative Positions.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R.C. *Right of Centre*
 L.C. *Left of Centre.*

THE IDIOT WITNESS.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

Ferry House on R.H.—Shed, with oars, &c. L.H. The River fills the back-ground with distant view of the opposite Landing place. Nets hung up against the house. Morning. Lively Music.

Enter DAME TUGSCULL, R.H. from House.

Dame. There—every thing is as tidy and as clean as it can be; the fire blazes cheerfully, the tankard of ale and the beef are on the table for breakfast,—and nothing is wanting but the return of my merry old man to make all comfortable. Janet, too, stays long on her errand. *(Paul heard without)* There he is, bless his old heart! as jolly, and as good an old soul—my Paul is—as ever lived.
(Music repeated)

Enter PAUL, L.H. U.E. with a basket.

Paul. (sings) “So tug away—pull away, my hearties!” Here I am, my hearty old messmate! with a good cargo. Main good luck this morning. Here, Janet! help me to heave this in, will you? for my lame leg is so weak, that I’m as tired as a boatswain’s mate after a hard day’s flogging.

Dame. Janet has not returned yet from the village. I can’t think what keeps her.—But *I’ll* carry the fish.

Paul. No, you won’t. Surely I’m as able to carry it as you are;—so heave a-head, and I will haul it in.

Dame. Ah, Paul, that wound of thine is a sad job!

Paul. No, dame, no,—for I consider it as a sort of acknowledgment from the enemy, for the many sound drubbings I helped to give them. But, come, heave a-head,—Janet will soon be back, I warrant her. *(Music, exit into cottage, singing, and dragging the basket after him.—Dame following)*

Enter JANET and ROBERT ARNAUD, (L.H. 1st E.)

Rob. Nay, listen to me, my sweet girl,—why so perverse?—why so coy?—a frown but ill becomes that pretty face.

Janet. I have already told you I will not listen to this language. Leave me, sir, or I will call my father.

Rob. Your father, my dear, will know his interest too well to interfere. But I mean not to insult you!—you know me not, if you think so.

Janet. Yes, sir, I do know you,—every one knows you. Though your father is a man of mystery, and reserved to all, you are well known as the most abandoned libertine in existence. To be seen in the company of Robert Arnaud, is death to the reputation of a young female.—I beseech you then to retire, and force me not to call my aged parents.—(*Rob. still following*) Nay, sir, follow me not, or I will rouse the honest thunder of a seaman's vengeance, who shall level your impertinence with the dust. (*breaks from him and runs into house.—Music.*)

Rob. Heroic! by all that's romantic. Egad, the girl's very resistance, does but increase my determination to possess her. I will lay regular siege—I have nothing else at present to do with my time; I have exhausted all my stock of money—my father, angered by my repeated calls for it, refuses to supply me with more—so I must vegetate down here on the heath a short time, and see what my late addition of court manners will do among the girls. Some one is coming! so, to use one of the old ferryman's phrases, I had better take myself off, and keep a good look out.—I'll listen. (*Retires behind Shed.*)

Music.—Enter PAUL from cottage, enraged.—JANET and DAME endeavour to appease him.

Paul. Don't tell me—I will follow the rascal to his father's, and to the end of the world, but I'll make him repent insulting the daughter of a British seaman! So, d'ye hear, dame,—fetch me my cudgel, and I'll run after him.

Dame. What—with that lame leg?

Paul. I forgot the splinter'd pin—but I'll hobble.

Janet. My dear father, take no notice of him this time; but if he does it again, then.

Paul. No, I won't wait till then.

Dame. Yes, you must, Paul,—and then I'll help you to hang him. 'Faith, and we'll rout the mysterious solitary, his father; and if he should not give us justice, bang him into the bargain.

Paul. Bravo! my old girl,—you're a fit wife for a British seaman—a woman who can temper his courage with wholesome advice, yet, if occasion require, has a heart bold enough to remind him he is a man. Yet, egad, my fingers itched to grapple with the fire-ship!

Dame. I think you've had enough of grappling with fire-ships—look at your lame leg!

Paul. My lame leg is always in your mouth. Janet, what's that you have in your breast—a letter?

Janet. Oh dear, yes, father, it was left in the village last night for you. I was so frightened, I forgot it till now.

Dame. I wonder who it is from!

Paul. Now your curiosity is on the tiptoe. There, I will read it when I come back from the ferry—ha! ha!

Dame. No nonsense—read it now; you see Janet is quite impatient.

Janet. No, that I'm not.

Dame. Yes, you are; for me, I don't care about it.—Read it directly, there's a good soul!

Paul. Well, let's overhaul it. Dame, bring yourself to anchor here, and don't be raking one fore and aft in this manner. (*opens letter*) Well, now, who d'you think it's from?

Dame. Why, from brother Anthony.

Paul. No, not from brother Anthony.

Dame. Cousin Stephen?

Paul. No, not Cousin Stephen.

Dame. Why don't you say who it is from? Dear me who does it come from?

Paul. How impatient Janet is—ha! ha! Why, it's from our little favourite, Walter.

Janet. From Walter!—what does he say, father—read away!

Paul. 'Gad, I think it is Janet that is impatient, after all. Why, he informs me, that the Queen has made him one of her Pages!

Rob. (behind) From Walter! I'll listen—perhaps there is some intelligence that may please my father.

Paul. Don't be crumpling the letter so—I will read it out; only I must first pipe all hands to order. Dame, you drop to larboard—Janet alongside. Now we're a-line, the devil take those astern. (*Robert returns*) Now for it!—

(*Reads*) “My dear Paul, and Dame, and dear dear Janet,—oh, dear Janet, I'm happy to say, I shall soon have an opportunity of being with you, for 'tis the Queen's intention to come down and inspect the College she has founded in your neighbourhood. I suppose you have heard of her munificence, in giving her palace there to found an hospital for wounded seamen? I expect her Majesty will send me forward to prepare for her reception, for she has lately added to my debt of gratitude, by making me one of her Pages. Janet will scarcely know her little Walter, I am so smart and tall. I have hardly time to say, you may expect me on the heels of the messenger—for I have just received orders, and he is waiting impatiently for this. Love to all. Give Janet a kiss for me; and take care not to let my dreadful uncle of the Heath, know any thing of my coming. Farewell!

Yours, &c. *Walter.”*

Dame. Bless his heart! I do so long to see him. I somehow love that boy as well as if he were my own son.

Paul. And I love him, because he is not my son, yet has proved one to me, when my wound was so bad that I scarce could sit in my boat to ferry passengers across the river.—He was always on the alert to assist me; and though his tender strength would not permit him to take all the toil upon himself, his willing heart sparkled in his eyes, and told me he would have done it if he could.

Dame. And did he not always declare, that I made dumplings better than the great cook at his uncle's?

Janet. And did he not always go with me to the village, and insist on carrying my basket back?

Paul. And then he is such a brave little dog!—'gad, how my heart leaped to see him dash into the water, and save the lady's life, when the Queen was returning from Tilbury Fort.—'Gad, he was a special good swimmer. He could scarcely have been eleven years old at the time.—

You know, it was for this act of daring, the Queen took notice of him.

Janet. And now she has made him one of her Pages!—How handsome he must look. But, father, you haven't given me that which he sent me. (*Paul kisses her.*)

Dame. I wish he were here to give it you himself. But Paul, his dread of his uncle seems undiminished;—think ye, what can occasion it?

Paul. I have some idea;—but doesn't every one dread the Solitary of the Heath? I never saw him but once, and then his face was so pale, his eyes so sunk and glaring, that I turned from his gaze with a shudder; and, I believe, for the first time in my life, trembled;—yes, I who have faced the enemy a hundred times, and helped to beat the Invincible Armada, I trembled at the gaze of Michael Arnand, the mysterious Solitary of the Heath.—No wonder a boy, like Walter, should dread his presence.

Dame. Well, come along Paul, and finish thy breakfast; and, egad, I must get about preparing for our favourite. I'll make some of my dumplings that he loves so. Well, come along Janet, and put the pot on to boil,—and quick, good man, and put some beef into thy stomach. (*Exeunt into House. Music—Robert advances.*)

Rob. So, so,—he is expected instantly! this is news indeed. My father, who wishes to get the boy in his power, will be pleased; and then I can, no doubt, wheedle him out of a farther supply for my extravagance, as they term it. Here goes to inform him, and try the effect.

[*Exit, R.H. 1st E.—Music.*]

Enter WALTER, (L.H. 1st E.) muffled in a clouk.

Walter. (*listens at door, and looks round*) Yes, every thing remains as it was—and I can hear Janet's pretty prattle. I wonder whether she is as much improved as I am?—I must be grown a great deal. Let me see—I could just stand under here, (*goes to shed*) now, bless my soul! I'm a head higher—I'm quite a man! aye, and a good little man, too. There lies the old boat that I have helped to haul up many a time, and scull across the river; my hands, no doubt, would blister now, if I attempted to handle an oar; and, I dare say, I have forgot the way,—let me see;—put it out behind,—(*imitates sculling a boat,*)—

that's all right,—out at the side—seat myself—put my foot firm,—now! (*imitates rowing of a boat*) No, I have not forgot how to help an old friend yet; and Janet shall find I've not forgot many other things, for I have had plenty of practice in kissing among the maids at Court. I wonder how the dame and her dumplings are? Now to try if they know me. Hollo! boat! ferryman there—Hollo! Hem, ha, hem. (*struts about.*)

Enter PAUL, from House.

Paul. Directly, your honour. Damme, what a strut!

Wal. How are you, ferryman?—how's the dame and her dumplings, hey?

Paul. (*aside*) Dame and her dumplings!—why how the devil does he know she is making dumplings. Why, dame is very well, but as for the dumplings—

Wal. Oh, ah, I know. But how is your daughter, my pretty Janet, hey? Hem!

Paul. Here, Dame, Janet!—come here, will ye? and bring my cudgel, for I've an idea I shall want it. His pretty Janet, indeed!

Enter DAME and JANET, from House—Dame's hands covered with flour.

Dame. Well, what's the matter now, good man?

Paul. Oh, here's a gentleman making particular enquiries about your dumplings?

Dame. Special good ones, your honour.

Wal. I know it, my good woman. Ha, how do you do, my pretty lass? (*chucks her under the chin*) Give me a kiss?

Paul. Avast there! or I shall shiver your maintop for you.

Wal. (*throwing off cloak*) Do it, master Tugscull—and welcome, if you will.

Paul. Walter!

Dame. My boy!

Janet. I am so happy!

Wal. Now won't you give me a kiss?

Janet. Yes, that I will. (*Walter kisses her.*)

Wal. Paul, give us a shake of your hand.—Dame, give me a kiss. (*kisses*) I see you knew I was fond of dumplings, for you have given me a handful.

} *Alltogether.*

Dame. Let me look at thee. What a main fine dress how folks will stare to see thee.

Paul. You have grown a fine fellow, Walter! and I'm glad to find you have not altered in you heart.

Wal. Not a bit. See what a strut I have got! A martial air I have acquired—I have learned to swim the mazes of the dance—to make love—(Janet will have a specimen of that presently)—to ride—to fence,—in full, I have become quite a courtier in all but my heart, which, ever amidst the vices and luxurious indolence of a Court remains uncorrupted and warm to its old friends.

Paul. That I will be bound it does. But when is our good Queen expected?—and do you mean to take up your abode with us? for I find by your letter you do not mean to go to your uncle's.

Wal. Oh, no, not for worlds!

Janet. Why this dread of him, Walter?—has he ever ill-used you?

Paul. He is a most mysterious man. Is it true, also, that he is a foreigner?

Enter HANS GERTHOLD, (R.H. U.E) retires, and listens behind.

Wal. He is a German; but I never could hear much of his history. I could never learn who my father was—he always shrunk from the enquiry; and I dreaded him too much to urge it. I have been from infancy taught to consider him as my uncle, but, from several circumstances, I can't help thinking I am no relation. The sight of me, at times, I thought was hateful to him; and he has often gazed upon me, then rushed from the room in the utmost agitation. I am sure, Paul, between ourselves, he has some crime hangs heavy upon his heart,—murder, perhaps.

Dame. Murder!—gracious defend us

Paul. What grounds have you to think so?

Wal. From broken sentences in his sleep—and from a conversation I overheard between him and his sweet valet Gerthold.—You have seen him; as ferocious a looking fellow as ever drew the breath of heaven. They mentioned my likeness to some one, and spoke of the cry of blood—in short, I heard him hint at murdering poor Gilbert the

Idiot! but then my uncle talked of a prophecy in Germany forbidding it.

Dame. What could that poor harmless fellow have done to offend him?

Paul. What indeed? I have often wondered at Arnaud's keeping the unfortunate wretch in his service.

Wal. (*apart to Paul*) I will tell you more in private.—*Dame!* how get the dumplings on?

Dame. Aye, true—come in and I'll finish them. Come, Janet, child.

Music.—*They Exit to Cottage; as Paul is following,*

Walter detains him. Exit Hans Gerthold, R.H. U.E.

Wal. Stay, and I'll tell you more I've learned. You wonder at his detaining Gilbert, because he is an idiot?—I understand he was not always so; but the ill-usage of my uncle, on account of his being a witness of some deed of darkness, robbed him of his senses. Instead of wishing to get rid of it, the poor wretch is absolutely Arnaud's prisoner; who never suffers him abroad, except accompanied by that villain Gerthold. Now, Paul, I entreat your silence on this subject,—heaven is all sufficient, and, in its all-wise time, will hurl retribution on the guilty. Come, a truce to this grave subject—I'm as hungry as a hunter! I shall eat like a little glutton! I left my horse to be well fed at the village, and now I shall make an attack on your beef.

Paul. Do so. I'll to the boat—but will soon return, and then you shall recount your adventures.

Wal. I will, I will.

(*Music.*—*Exeunt Walter into Cottage, Paul to the boat,*
U.E. L.H.)

Enter HANS and GILBERT, R.H. U.E.

Hans. Gilbert! come, I say,—you are as slow as a snail. Come! or I shall kick you forward.

Gilb. Kick! la, how wonderful!

Hans. I shall, one day or other, cut your throat in a passion.

Gilb. I should die then—shouldn't I? La, how wonderful!

Hans. Ugh! There is the cottage, (*looks thro' window*) and there is the youngster.—I shall spoil your laughing

master Walter, shortly. Now you know your directions. D'ye hear?

Gilb. Yes, good Hans—don't be cross with me, I, I,—la, how wonderful!

Hans. Then obey them punctually—or, when you return, you shall be punished. Oh, here he comes!

Enter ROBERT. (R.H. U.E.)

Well, master Robert, he is safe in the house—what are we to do?—you have seen your father?

Rob. Yes,—and he bids me order you to summon Walter to his presence; and if he refuses, you must use force.

Hans. I like force. Gilbert—fool—knock at the door.

Gilb. I will. (*knocks at door.*)

Rob. Retire!

Gilb. I will. (*retires.*)

Enter WALTER from Cottage.—Starts, on seeing ROBERT. DAME and JANET following.

Rob. Walter, your uncle is amazed at your want of that respect due to him, and summons you to attend him on the Heath.

Hans. Aye, directly.

Wal. Master Robert Arnaud, I must speak plainly with you. My uncle's conduct to me has never been such as could kindle affection in my breast—his character is not one I can respect. I will not accompany you.

Rob. Beware, young man,—he is not to be trifled with. Do not oblige us to use force.

Wal. You dare not do it!—I am a servant of the Queen's.

Rob. No power will screen you from your uncle's vengeance. Gilbert, advance and seize him.

Gilb. I will.

Dame. Do, if you dare!—I'll crack your head with the ladle!

Gilb. La, how wonderful! (*retreats.*)

(*Music.—Hans crosses, and throws Walter round to L.H., and is about to seize him, when PAUL enters, and throws himself in an attitude of defence between them with an oar.*)

Paul. Holloa! my hearties,—what means this? Walter, drop alongside of me, and let us parley a bit with them.

[*Exit Dame, into house.*]

Wal. My good friend, they wish to force me to my uncle's against my inclination. I will not go.

Rob. You must.

Paul. Belay there a bit—will ye?—Why must he?—at whose orders?

Rob. That of his only natural protector—his uncle.

Paul. Has his uncle ever protected him!—no. Then how dare he pretend to a power over him. This boy has been a son to me—he has soothed my pain and eased me of my toil! think ye then I will stand by and see him trampled upon?—no. My arm is an old one, 'tis true; it has ere now, helped to beat the enemies of my country—and while I have a drop of blood left to animate it, it shall defend the cause of the oppressed and innocent. So sheer off, or damme if I don't scuttle some of your nobs for you! (*stands in a menacing attitude.*)

Rob. Resistance is in vain. Hans, tear the boy from him.

Enter DAME, with dumpling-pot.

Dame. If you do, I'll give you dumplings—broth and all, over you!

Gilb. Dumplings! la, how wonderful!

Rob. Why do you hesitate? Tear him away, I say.

Music.—*They advance to seize him. Paul defends him from them with an oar. Dame advances, and hurls the contents of dumpling-pot over Gilbert. Robert forces the oar from Paul, and throws him to the ground. Hans levels pistol at Paul.—Tableau.*

A C T I I.

SCENE I.—*Same as before.*

PAUL discovered seated, L.H. and *DAME* at door of house, dejected. *JANET* weeping in front of the stage.—*Exactly the same as it was at the end of Act I.—the dumplings, &c. lying about.*

Paul. Why do you sit there, dame, mumchance?—why don't you speak a word to cheer a poor body a bit?—There's Janet, too, with all hands at her pumps. Come, come, cheer up, girl, the Queen will soon be here; and when she arrives, I will find some way to force myself into her presence. Come, dry up your tears, and let us think of rescuing him from his dread uncle's power,

Dame. To think, too, that I should have the trouble of making my dumplings, to be wasted on that idiot fool; but if I don't hustle, we shall all be starved. It is long past dinner-time now, and there is nothing prepared. Come, Janet, lass—stir thee.

Janet. 'Think you, my dear father, that they will dare to touch his life?

Paul. Never fear, never fear,—there! help thy mother to pick up the dumplings.

Dame. (*while busied*) Poor lad! he seemed to dread going.—That Arnaud can have no good motive for keeping him on the Heath—one, two, three,—here is all of them, sure enough! but they may all go to the pig. Come, Janet, girl, follow me. [*Exit into Cottage.*

Janet. Oh, father, if they harm Walter I shall be miserable all the rest of my days. [*Exit into Cottage.*

Paul. Egad, so shall I.—However, to prevent all evil doings, I'll go and look out for passengers. 'Faith, I fear it is later than we think, for the sun is down, and feel as hungry—here, dame, cut me a bit of junk, will ye? I'll just take a snack and then sheer off.

[*Exit into Cottage.*

Enter ARNAUD, (R.H. 1st E.) looks cautiously round.

Arnaud. So—now to question the ferryman; this intelligence of Gerthold has alarmed me! but guilt is easily alarmed—the canker, Conscience, gnawing at my heart, if startled by the breath of rude Suspicion, becomes enraged, and drives me to madness. How could he learn the tale of blood?—impossible! and yet Hans affirms, he heard him in plain and undisguised terms inform this ferryman. S'dearth! shall my life hang on the nod of two such instruments?—no! thus deep in blood, I must plunge farther,—the boy shall die to-night; thus shall I rid me of one adder in my path.

Enter PAUL, from house.

Paul. Now, dame, I'm under-weigh. (*sees Arnaud*)—Shiver my timbers! Arnaud of the Heath! (*starts and retreats.*)

Arn. Are you the ferryman?

Paul. Yes. (*aside*) I wouldn't venture in the boat with him for his fortune.

C

Arn. Are you acquainted with my nephew, Walter Arlington?

Paul. I am. (*aside*) He'll get nothing from me.

Arn. He was here this morning?

Paul. Yes—and your son has dared to break in upon our comfort, by tearing him away.

Arn. 'Twas at my command. The stripling had refused obedience to my orders—I am not to be trifled with, but am always prepared with means to silence opposition.

Paul. (*aside*) Yes, and silencing means they are, I take it. (*crossing his throat.*)

Arn. Did he ever speak of me?

Paul. Yes.

Arn. This morning in particular?

Paul. Yes—that, that is, no. (*aside*) Why did he ask?

Arn. (*aside*) He starts and is confounded—Hans is right. What makes you take so strong an interest in the boy?

Paul. The cause of innocence will ever find a helping hand in Paul; while that of hidden guilt will find in him a searching foe.

Arn. 'Tis so! the boy, by some unknown means, has got the secret,—he does but urge his fate.

Paul. I must away. (*crosses*) I beseech you, master Arnaud, as you value heaven's pardons for the crimes you have committed, harm not the innocent boy, he has been a blessing to us in our age; our benisons are on him, and may our curses, thrice redoubled, fall on him who dares to do him wrong. [*Exit to boat.*]

Arn. The secret, I for years have hidden in my breast, is then at last discovered? and ruin, shame, and an ignominious death, now threaten me. Blinded by an unlawful passion for the wife of him I called my friend, I forgot our oath of lasting friendship, and Ratchiff fell beneath my murderous dagger. Walter, I—but I must not yield myself to poor remorse, my safety requires instant action. Walter dies to-night,—the ferryman may next require attention. Once dipped in blood, I must wade on or perish. Gerthold approaches,—and with him, another victim of my villanies.—Oh! agony of recollection.

Enter HANS and GILBERT, (R.H. U.E.)

Hans. I have secured the boy, and wait for further orders.

Arn. He must die to-night. 'Tis too true what you have informed me of.—By some means he has gained a knowledge of our guilt. Come hither, fool! (*to Gilbert, L.H.*)

Gilb. Fool—la!

Arn. Think ye, Hans, we dare trust him to wait the ferryman's return, and then inform us?

Hans. Do as you like,—I wouldn't quit him from my sight. To-night, while sleep seals up their eyes, we may easily enter the cottage, and silence our fears of Paul.

Arn. Right,—retire.

Gilb. I will. (*goes near the door of cottage.*)

Arn. In what chamber have you put the boy?

Hans. In the one between your own and Robert's.

Arn. 'Tis well—'tis easy of access; and when he sleeps, strike home! or his cries may alarm the cottagers who dwell around us.

Enter DAME, from Cottage—meets GILBERT face to face.

Gilb. Dumplings—la, how wonderful!

(*Retires to L.H. corner—she comes down R.H.*)

Dame. So—you are here, master Arnaud!—and what do you want?—to murder us, perhaps.

Arn. Peace, beldame!

Dame. I shan't.—It wouldn't be the first murder you have had a hand in, I take it.

Arn. (*agitated*) Silence, or—

Dame. Do so—stab a defenceless woman, it suits with your bravery.—But no, I am safe, I take it—you do all your murders in the dark.

Arn. Fiends—tortures—agency!

[*Rushes off, R.H. 1st E.—Music.*]

Gilb. (*goes to wing and looks after him*) How wonderful!

Hans. Harkee, dame—you had better keep a civil tongue in your head; my master is not to be insulted with impunity.

Dame. And you had better troop off, before my good man returns, or you'll get an oar about your knave's sconce.

Gilb. Yes, Hans, let us go home, I am sleepy—I'm sure 'tis bed-time.

Hans. Look you repent it not.

Dame. Troop off with your ill-looking visage. Come fool, away with you!

Gilb. I will.

Hans. You will be sorry for this before twelve.

(*Music.—Exit grumbling, R.H. U. E. Gilbert looks round, and approaches Dame, as if he had something to say.*)

Hans. (*calls without*) Gilbert!

Gilb. Dumplings!—la, how wonderful!

[*Exit Gilbert, R.H. U.E. Dame, into cottage.*]

SCENE II.—*Front Chamber in Arnaud's House.*

Music.—Enter ROBERT ARNAUD, (L.H. 1st E.

Rob. He still refuses to supply me with money, and I must break my promise with my friends. There is but one way—'tis an unpleasant one—but, I believe, I must resort to it. I observed a purse in Walter's bosom; it seemed well stocked—and while he sleeps, I must make it mine. 'Tis not altogether honourable—but Honour and I have long since shaken hands. (*Gilbert, L.H. runs across.*) Ho! Gilbert! I'll question this fool. Come here.

Gilb. I will.

Rob. Have you observed a purse Walter carries in his bosom?

Gilb. A purse—la! what's a purse?

Rob. Fool!

Gilb. Oh, then I'm a purse. Hans often calls me fool.

Rob. Have you seen Walter with money?

Gilb. Ha! I know what money is.

Rob. Have you seen a purse, with money, in his bosom?

Gilb. Bosom! money!—the woman pelted me with dumplings,—la!

Rob. Idiot—leave me.

Gilb. I will. La! wonderful. [*Exit, R.H. 1st E.*

Rob. What can be my father's motive for retaining that witless being, I never could discover! He brought him over with him from Germany, and I heard him give Hans, and the other servants, charge, never to lose sight of him. My father is mysterious in every thing, and doubly so in this. But I must have the purse, or I shall lose my character for punctuality—to gain it, I must become a thief! well, the wine the gold will purchase, will drown all recollection of the means with which I obtained it.

[*Exit R.H. 1st E.—Music.*]

SCENE III -- *A Chamber at Arnaud's—Stage dark.—open window in centre—a bed on R.H. side.*

WALTER *discovered seated disconsolately on it. Door L.H. 1st E.—another in flutt, R.H.*

Enter HANS GERTHOLD, with a light, from door, L.H.

Han. Why, master Walter, you look as dull as if you had been turned from a home instead of brought to one! Come, cheer up; you are with your uncle, who, you know, loves you, and wishes you well—(*aside*) out of the way.

Wal. Why then does he detain me! If he wishes me well, is it a proof of his love to make a prisoner of me?

Hans. For that. I dare say, he has motives of his own. He will be here shortly, you may then enquire them.

Wal. (*aside*) Yes, it's all up with poor Walter! I shall be food for birds before the morning. I hope they don't intend to cut my throat! I should look so ugly with a great gash here! What a black-looking dog it is! I think, of the two, he is uglier than my uncle. Oh, lord!—here he comes! Mercy defend me!

Enter ARNAUD, from door, L.H.

Arn. Walter—come here!

Wal. I'd rather not—if it's all the same to you uncle

Arn. What fear you, boy?—have I ever harm'd you?

Wal. No, but perhaps you intend to do it.

Arn. Banish those fears—I love you, Walter.

Wal. (*aside*) Perhaps so—but you've a devilish odd way of showing it.

Arn. But hurt at your preferring the protection of others to mine, I have been, perhaps, harsh in forcing you here.—Forgive me for it. I am glad to find you thrive so well at Court, and do not forget your friends. But the ferryman I will find the means to reward.

Hans. (*aside*) Yes, with a few inches of cold steel.

Wal. (*aside*) Is it possible, for the man who talks like this, to be guilty of murder?

Arn. You will sleep here to-night; and in the morning you shall return to your duty.

Wal. Thanks, my kind uncle.

Arn. You must be wearied with your journey, and had better retire to rest.

Wal. I will instantly, for I feel exhausted.

Arn. Do so. Follow me, Hans. (*To Hans, aside*) Now when he sleeps! Good night—night.

[*Exit with Hans. Walter runs to door, when they are off.*]

Wal. Ha, there is no fastener.—Well, I shall not need one, they will not harm me Yaw! I'll have a sleep, then hey for morning and my dear little Janet.

(*Music.—He lays down—a Letter is thrown in at the window, fastened to a stone.*)

Wal. Hey—what is that, a rat?—no, it's a letter! Where did it come from?—through this window; and there is a ladder placed against it. What does it say? I do so love a bit of adventure. Perhaps some neighbouring damsel in love with me?—poor things! they cannot help it. What does it say? (*reads*) "If you sleep, you will be murdered. There is a plot against your life.—Beware! A pleasant appointment this, upon my soul;—but I'll cheat them.—Oh, some one is coming! I'll feign to sleep.

(*Music—throws himself on the bed.*)

Enter HANS, L.H. door, cautiously.

Hans. He sleeps!—all is safe! Now to complete my work. (*steals towards Walter, who starts up.*)

Wal. What do you want here, Hans? creeping about the room like a mouse.

Hans. I want the light—you can sleep in the dark.

Wal. You've got the torch. Why come you near my bed?

Hans. To tell you that you needn't fear to sleep in the dark, for master Robert sleeps in that room. (*points to door in flat, R.H.*)

Wal. Oh, well,—good night!

Hans. Good night. (*aside*) Eternal curses light on you!

[*Exit Hans. Stage dark. Walter listens at door.*]

Wal. So—now he's off; and now I'll be off, presto, thro' the window. (*goes to window*) It's all over with me—the ladder's gone!—Yes, I'm killed and cut up, to a certainty! the window is too high to leap out of without endangering my neck; but better risk it by a jump, than stay and have it disfigured by Hans Gerthold's ugly knife.

(*He is about to Exit, when he hears a noise at the door of Robert's Chamber.—Music.* "Here they come again!") *Throws himself on the bed.*)

Music.—Enter ROBERT ARNAUD, from door in flat, R.F. cautiously, and listens.

Rob. So—all is quiet—and now for the purse!

Enter SIEUR ARNAUD, L.H. door, with a dagger.

Arn. I will not trust again to Gerthold—my own hand shall complete the work. (*Music.*)

Rob. Yes, yes, the purse is mine?

(*Music.—He approaches the bed. At the moment he stoops to take the purse, Arnaud stabs, as if at Walter, and stabs Robert. Walter slides off the bed—Robert falls and dies.*)

Arnaud. 'Tis done!

(*Walter rushes down to the front of the stage, and kneels. Music.*)

Wal. Father of heaven!—accept my thanks! (*Music. This is all the work of a moment, and done as near together as possible.*)

Enter HANS, L.H. door, with a light.

(*Walter, who has approached the door, starts back, and leaps through window. Arnaud, who has stood overpowered for a moment by his feelings, starts on seeing Walter.*

Arn. Do my senses mock me?—whom then have I slain? Merciful heaven! my son! My shrinking soul scarce credits the evidence of my startling eyes—yet, 'tis he. Oh, horror! Robert—my boy—revive! Dead—quite dead, and I his murderer!—my guilty hand stained with the blood of my own son! Oh, villain—accursed, accursed for ever! (*sinks on the ground.—Music.*)

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *Interior of Paul's Cottage.*

Table, chairs, fire—a lamp burning on table—thunder and lightning, rain, &c. Music agitato.

DAME and JANET discovered.

Dame. This is a dreadful night.—Draw near the fire Janet. No getting a word out of you since this business of Walter's. Come, don't sit there moping.

Janet I am thinking, mother, that my father stays long at the ferry—I hope he has got into no danger?

Dame. Oh, no, we shall have him home again soon with a fine wet jacket. Well, supper is ready, so the sooner he comes the better

Paul (without) Dame Tugscull, a-hoy! (*Enters.*) Dammo,

here's a squall ! Clear the house, dame—put every thing in order,—I've brought such a cargo of fine folks for shelter from the storm—the Earl of Sussex, and a whole crew of attendants. I've just ferried them and their horses across the river, and they are bearing down upon us for house-room. I like this Earl, he is a rough soldier ; and it is to his representations we are indebted for the gift of the palace to found an hospital,—so, d'ye see Dame, make 'em comfortable.—They're not far astern, for my lame knee wouldn't let me get much to windward of them.

Dame. Gad a mercy, Paul, I'm in such a flurry ! Janet lass, rub the chairs. Only to think ! an Earl—a right down earnest Earl coming to our cottage ! Janet, girl—why don't you stir ?—you do nothing. (*During this speech, she is running about, and doing nothing herself.*)

Janet. I think it's you who are a-doing nothing, mother.

Paul. 'Gad, I think so too ;—but it's too late now, for here comes his Lordship.

Music.—*Enter SUSSEX in cloak, and Attendants, &c.*

Paul. Welcome, my lord—welcome to my humble habitation. You will find but poor accommodation, but willing hearts, my lord.

Dame. Welcome, my Lordship—welcome, gentlemen.—(*cartseying.*)

Sussex. And do you not welcome me, my pretty lass ?

Janet. That I do, my Lord.

Paul. Aye, that she does—with all her heart, my Lord.

Dame. You'll excuse her, my Lord, I know you will ; she is bashful, like me. But won't your Lordship sit near the fire ? Will your Lordship take a bit of special fine bacon ? we've some fine cabbages—or a bason of broth ?

Sussex. I thank ye, my good woman, I do but need the shelter of your roof while the storm lasts. You have heard, my worthy host, of her Majesty's intended visit to inspect the College ?

Paul. I have, this morning, had a visit from Walter Arlington, her Page.

Dame. Tell his Lordship of his seizure.

Paul. I will so ; but— (*the Door bursts open, and Walter rushes in. Hurried Music.*)

Wal. My friend, protect me—save me !

Music.—Enter ARNAUD, at door, followed by HANS, GILBERT, and Servants.

Paul. Mysterious man! why is this boy thus persecuted?

Arn. Resign him,—he is guilty of murder!—he has killed my son.

Wal. No, no, no,—I entreat you do not believe him—I am not guilty—'twas he. Indeed, I am innocent!

Paul. That I will be sworn for. My Lord of Sussex, I claim your protection for our Sovereign's Page. I will answer, with my life, for his innocence.

Wal. Oh, my good Lord! in mercy shield me from that man—he would have murdered me! this dagger yet reeks with the blood of his son. Oh, save! do not yield me to his power.

Sussex. I will not, boy, if it is as thou hast said.

Arn. My Lord, you will not surely listen to that guilty youth? Is it at all in reason, that a father would stain his hand with the blood of a son, so tenderly beloved as mine was?—no, my good Lord, your judgment must convince you of the fallacy of such a charge. There is the viper I have nourished in my bosom—there is the worm who basked in my favour, stung the fostering hand that fed him,—and repaid my tenderness, by murdering my beloved son. And see! in damning evidence, he bears proof on his breast! (*Music.*—Points to spots of blood on Walter's vest.)

Paul. Walter!

Wal. You surely do not think me guilty? By the purity of heaven I am innocent! Dame, Janet, my Lord, he would have murdered me! his dagger was uplifted, when—ha, ha, ha! (*overpowered by his emotion, sinks into the arms of Paul.*)

Arn. You see, my Lord, the consciousness of guilt confronts him.

Sussex. I confess that circumstances are against him; yet what could urge him to commit the dreadful deed?

Arn. His motives, my good lord, are palpable; my son removed, he is my heir;—added to which, they quarrelled this morning, and it required my utmost authority to restore peace between them.

Sussex. I must order him under arrest till morning, then the Queen shall be your judge.

Paul. My good Lord, I beseech you, break not his noble

heart by consigning him to a prison—I will answer, with my life, for his innocence.

Dame. And I, my Lord.

Janet. My Lord, he is incapable of crime,—his generous soul disdains the very thought of guilt.—Let me be your prisoner—but do not harm our Walter.

Arn. Will your Lordship consign him to my custody—I will be answerable for his appearance in the morning?

Paul. No, my Lord,—in doing that, you will consign him to certain death. Villain! have you not sufficient blood on your soul, but you must add the murder of this inoffending boy?

Arn. Back—meddler. Give me the boy.

Paul. Never. I am a British seaman, and would scorn to fight under the flag of villany, but damme if I wouldn't shed my last drop of blood in conveying a cargo of innocence.

Dame. That's right, husband,—and I will stand by you tooth and nail.

Wal. I will go to prison, my Lord—but do not give me into Arnaud's power;—full well he knows my innocence; which now I call on heaven to testify. I will go to prison my Lord, convinced that to-morrow will establish it beyond a doubt. Do not cry, Janet,—why don't you look cheerful, like me? Heaven bless ye, Dame. Paul, my friend, I'll bear it like a man. (*sobs.*)

Paul. Ha! a thought strikes me, my Lord; from a conversation Walter has overheard, I have reason to believe I can, beyond a doubt, prove a former murder committed by the hand of Arnaud.

Arn. A former murder! what—where—my Lord? 'Tis but a shallow artifice to invalidate my evidence.

Essex. You say he heard this conversation?—has any other person heard it?

Paul. No, my Lord, but—

Arn. No, my Lord, 'tis plain 'tis but an artifice, you must observe. Where are his witnesses?—I dare him to the proof.—He has none, my Lord—not one.

GILBERT rushes down from back.

Gil. 'Tis false.—I, Gilbert, your idiot slave, am witness of your guilt, and am come to crush thee.

Arn. How—Gilbert! Heaven itself conspires against me. Fool, idiot!

Gilb. I am not an idiot—nor ever was one. Villain

the hour of retribution is arrived; and that heaven which saw you perpetrate your crime, makes me an instrument to hurl its thunders on ye. My Lord, behold the assassin of your brother! these eyes beheld that villain strike his death blow—these eyes were witness to the murder of the best of masters. Eight years I was his prisoner, chained in a loathsome dungeon,—still I lived upon the hope of revenge; I prayed for it, thirsted for it—I have gained it. By affecting idiotism, I regained my liberty, in part; but still he kept a wary eye upon me. With a bursting heart I played the heedless fool; and oft, while tears were gushing from my eyes, and wild emotions choked me in the throat, with vacant laugh I've hid my aching heart—for what? to right my master's son, and hurl destruction on his villain murderer.

Sussex. It seems then, Walter, thou art my nephew. — My poor unhappy brother!

Gilb. He was the kindest master.

Wal. It seems then, Gilbert, it was you who informed me of Arnaud's base intentions?

Gilb. I overheard their murderous plan, and threw that letter to acquaint you of it.

Sussex. (to Arnaud) Wretched man! (to Paul) For you, my friend, you shall not lack reward for the kindness you have shewn my nephew.

Paul. My Lord, if Walter will, there is poor Janet,—for myself, I wish no reward.

Wal. My friend, in whatever way I am situated, it shall not affect my love. (Crosses, and takes Janet by the hand, and kisses her.)

Sussex. Seize that villain! (to Servants, who approach Arnaud, who has been standing stupified with the discovery of his guilt.)

Arn. (starts) Off, slaves! Thou reptile! would I could crush thee into nothingness.—Fooled, baffled. See, see! the murdered Ratcliff with his claim in heaven, smiles contemptuous on my agonies! while yelling spectres shriek my name aloud, and claim me for their own. A liquid fire runs through my veins—off, fiends! I come to join you in your world of flames!

(Shoots himself and dies. A Picture formed by the other Characters.)

R.H.

LH.

PAUL. DAME. WALTER. ESSEX. JANET. HANS.

(The following Scene was originally belonging to the Idiot Witness, on its production, though it has been since omitted.)

SCENE THE LAST

*View of the Palace at Greenwich—the River Thames, &c
Th. me, R.H.*

Music.—Officers of the Palace enter with wands—Seamen bearing flags and trophies of the Conquest.

QUEEN ELIZABETH, mounted on a superb charger, attended by the EARL OF SUSSEX, and other Nobles, on horseback—she is assisted to dismount. Ascends the Throne. Grand flourish.—The EARL OF SUSSEX kneels, and presents the PAGE.

Ratcliffe. Most gracious protector of the injured and oppressed, allow me to solicit your notice for my nephew, Walter Ratcliffe, long deprived of his hereditary name and fortune, by the machinations of a villain! You have nourished the bud of honour in his breast when he was unknown, continue then to smile upon him, and I venture to predict he will become a full-blown flower of chivalry and loyalty.

Queen. By what strange circumstances the nephew of my most trusty nobles could have been so long concealed, I have yet to learn; but 'tis enough that you have acknowledged him. My Lord, he has before felt our favour, and we pledge ourselves to continue it, as long as he deserves it at our hands.

Wal. And when I do not, gracious Sovereign, may I be hunted and despised by all my fellow men.

Queen. Enough. As an earnest of our smiles, rise Sir Walter Ratcliffe! our own true knight.

Flourish. The Queen knights him—he rises. A nautical emblematic Ballet takes place and

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

